WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A niobium powder comprising niobium and tantalum, wherein the tantalum is present in an amount of at most about 700 ppm by mass.

2. The niobium powder as claimed in claim 1, wherein the niobium powder is partially nitrided.

3. The niobium powder as claimed in claim 2, wherein the amount nitrided is from about 10 to about 100,000 ppm by mass.

4. A sintered body comprising the niobium powder described in any one of claims 1 to 3.

5. A method for producing a niobium sintered body, comprising sintering a niobium powder compact at a high temperature, wherein the niobium powder is the niobium powder described in any one of claims 1 to 3 and heating said niobium powder under reduced pressure at about 500 to about 2,000°C for about 1 minute to about 10 hours.

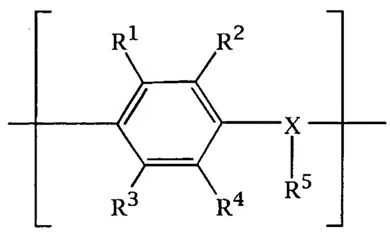
6. The method for producing a niobium sintered body as claimed in claim 5, wherein the niobium powder is obtained by granulating a niobium powder having an average primary particle size of about 1 μm or less.

7. A capacitor comprising a pair of electrodes having interposed therebetween a dielectric material, with one of the electrodes being the niobium sintered body described in claim 4.

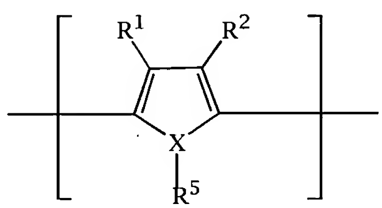
8. The capacitor as claimed in claim 7, wherein the dielectric material comprises niobium oxide formed by electrolytic oxidation.

9. The capacitor as claimed in claim 7, wherein the other electrode is at least one material selected from the group consisting of an electrolytic solution, an organic semiconductor and an inorganic semiconductor.

10. The capacitor as claimed in claim 7, wherein the other electrode is formed of at least one organic semiconductor selected from the group consisting of an organic semiconductor comprising benzopyrroline tetramer and chloranile, an organic semiconductor mainly comprising tetrathiotetracene, an organic semiconductor mainly comprising tetracyanoquinodimethane, and an organic semiconductor mainly comprising an electrically conducting polymer obtained by doping a dopant into a polymer containing two or more repeating units represented by formula (1) or (2):



(1)



(2)

wherein R^1 to R^4, which may be the same or different, each represents hydrogen, an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms or an alkoxy group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, X represents an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom or a nitrogen atom, R^5 is present only when X is a nitrogen atom and represents hydrogen or an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4 may be combined with each other to form a ring.

11. The capacitor as claimed in claim 7, wherein the organic semiconductor is at least one selected from the group consisting of polypyrrole, polythiophene and substitution derivatives thereof.

12. An electronic circuit using the capacitor described in claim 7.

13. Electronic equipment using the capacitor described in claim 7.

14. A sintered body comprising a niobium granule which comprises niobium and tantalum, wherein the tantalum is present in an amount of at most about 700 ppm by mass.

15. The sintered body according to claim 14, wherein the niobium granule is partially nitrided.

16. The sintered body according to claim 15, wherein an amount of the niobium granule nitrided is from about 10 to about 100,000 of ppm by mass.

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17. A method for producing a niobium sintered body, comprising sintering a niobium granule compact at a high temperature, wherein the niobium granule comprises niobium and tantalum, wherein the tantalum is present in an amount of at most about 700 ppm by mass, and heating said niobium granule under reduced pressure at about 500 to about 2,000°C for about 1 minute to about 10 hours.

18. The method for producing a niobium sintered body according to claim 17, wherein the niobium granule is partially nitrided.

19. The method for producing a niobium sintered body according to claim 18, wherein an amount of the niobium granule is from about 10 to about 100,000 of ppm by mass.

20. The method for producing a niobium sintered body according to claim 17, wherein the niobium powder is obtained by granulation and has an average primary particle size of about 1 μm or less.

21. The method for producing a niobium sintered body according to claim 18, wherein the niobium powder is obtained by granulation and has an average primary particle size of about 1 μm or less.

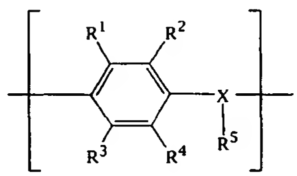
22. The method for producing a niobium sintered body according to claim 19, wherein the niobium powder is obtained by granulation and has having an average primary particle size of about 1 μm or less.

23. A capacitor comprising a pair of electrodes having interposed therebetween a dielectric material, with one of the electrodes being a niobium sintered body comprising niobium and tantalum, wherein the tantalum is present in an amount of at most about 700 ppm by mass.

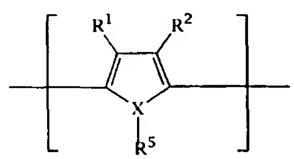
24. The capacitor according to claim 23, wherein the dielectric material comprises niobium oxide formed by electrolytic oxidation.

25. The capacitor according to claim 23, wherein the other electrode is at least one material selected from the group consisting of an electrolytic solution, an organic semiconductor and an inorganic semiconductor.

26. The capacitor according to claim 23, wherein the other electrode is formed of at least one organic semiconductor selected from the group consisting of an organic semiconductor comprising benzopyrroline tetramer and chloranile, an organic semiconductor mainly comprising tetrathiotetracene, an organic semiconductor mainly comprising tetracyanoquinodimethane, and an organic semiconductor mainly comprising an electrically conducting polymer obtained by doping a dopant into a polymer containing two or more repeating units represented by formula (1) or (2):



(1)



(2)

wherein R^1 to R^4, which may be the same or different, each represents hydrogen, an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms or an alkoxy group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, X represents an oxygen atom, a sulfur atom or a nitrogen atom, R^5 is present only when X is a nitrogen atom and represents hydrogen or an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and R^1 and R^2, or R^3 and R^4 may be combined with each other to form a ring.

27. The capacitor according to claim 23, wherein the other electrode comprises an organic semiconductor selected from the group consisting of polypyrrole, polythiophene and substitution derivatives thereof.

28. An electronic circuit including the capacitor as claimed in claim 23.

29. Electronic equipment including the capacitor as claimed in claim 23.

30. The sintered body as claimed in claim 14, wherein the niobium granule is obtained by standing niobium powder at a high temperature to obtain a coagulation-solidified powder and then cracking the coagulation-solidified powder.

31. The method for producing a niobium sintered body as claimed in claim 17, wherein the niobium granule is obtained by standing niobium powder at a high temperature to obtain a coagulation-solidified powder and then cracking the coagulation-solidified powder.

32. The capacitor as claimed in claim 23, wherein the niobium granule is obtained by standing niobium powder at a high temperature to obtain a coagulation-solidified powder and then cracking the coagulation-solidified powder.